

# Spring Season

Spring Season is characterized by the rebirth, renewal, and regrowth of life. Flowers start blooming, animals come out of hibernation, bird migrations take place and temperatures start to rise, erasing any signs of snow left. Spring season starts mid-March and ends mid-June, days will start to become longer, and nights will become shorter leading to the summer season. This season is the perfect time to get your gardening skills going on, this will ensure you will get blooming flowers early in summer.



## Are you ready for an adventure?

Use the activities and supplies in this backpack to explore Otter Creek Lake & Park with your group. This backpack includes materials for up to 4 people in your group. When you're done, return the supplies and the backpack and clean up any activities you completed. Remember, the best way to keep our park clean is by leaving no trace!

Then, make plans to visit another park in one of Iowa's 99 counties! Can you visit them all? Get the full list at [www.traveliowa.com/99parks](http://www.traveliowa.com/99parks).

## Spring Season Park-Pack Supplies:

- **Scavenger Hunt /Autumn Crossword Puzzle**
  - ✓ Pens
  - ✓ Activity sheets
- **Hiking Activities**
- **Crafts**
  - ✓ Paper
  - ✓ Crayons
  - ✓ Plastic spoon
  - ✓ Rubber band
  - ✓ Pom-poms
  - ✓ Glue
  - ✓ Yarn
- **Recommended readings:**
  - ✓ *The Cloud Book*
  - ✓ *Creepy Crawlies*
  - ✓ *Guide to Common Trees & Shrubs of Iowa*
  - ✓ *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Trees*
  - ✓ Tama Co. brochure
- **Insect Activity**
  - ✓ 4 Containers
  - ✓ 4 Magnifying glasses

## Caution

All activities included in this Park-Pack should be done under the supervision of an adult. To have an incredible nature adventure, don't forget to wear sunscreen and insect repellent. Check the forecast and make an emergency plan if necessary. Dress appropriately for the weather, especially during winter and summer, and do not put yourself (willingly) in any dangerous situation. Last, but not least, always respect our parks; one of the best ways to do so is by leaving no trace and picking up after yourself; also, don't forget to have lots of fun!

## Beware



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**Wild or yellow parsnip** is a wild invasive plant from Europe/Asia. It contains a chemical in sap/juice (found in seeds, stems, leaves, and flowers). When exposed to sunlight, contact with the skin could cause localized skin burns and blisters.



*Tut Underwood/SC Public Radio*

**Poison ivy** contains an oil called urushiol, which some people might be allergic to. Touching any part of the plant can cause red, swollen skin, blisters, and severe itching. A saying to help identify this plant is "leaves of three, let it be."

# SPRING SENSORY SCAVENGER HUNT

LISTEN FOR



LOOK FOR



FEEL



FIND A CLOUD WITH A SHAPE

LOOK FOR A  
CATERPILLAR

FIND  
ANIMAL  
TRACKS



LOOK FOR TREE WITH  
BRIGHTEST LEAVES



LOOK FOR AN  
INSECT



FIND BIG  
BLUE STEM  
OR  
"TURKEY'S  
FOOT"  
GRASS

FIND A PLANT SPROUT



VISIT THE NATURE CENTER,  
COME SEE THE EXHIBIT  
ROOM!

FIND A THIRTEEN-LINED GROUND  
SQUIRREL



## Bug Hunt

Materials: magnifying glass & empty box

1. Spread out boxes around the area looking for bugs. Check on flowers, and flip over stones or logs.
  - Encourage kids to not touch bugs (avoid bites and stings), see if the bugs will freely walk into the box.
2. Examine the bugs with magnifying glasses. How many legs do they have? What color are they? How do they move?
3. Only keep bugs in boxes for a few minutes. Then release them safely back to their habitat.
4. Learn more about bugs and insects at Iowa State University's Bug Guide [www.bugguide.com](http://www.bugguide.com).

## Nature Bookmark

Materials: paper & multi-purpose glue

1. Collect leaves, flowers, or even little rocks!
  - Try collecting from what has already been dropped and pay close attention to poison ivy and yellow parsnip.
2. Grab a piece of paper, use collected resources, and glue them to create your nature bookmark!
3. Insert yarn through the punch hole and tie it. Your bookmark is now finished.

## Cloud Gazing

Materials: Cloud viewer

1. Use the cloud viewer inside your Park-Pack
2. Hold the cloud viewer at an arm's length, look through the center of the cloud photos to identify the cloud type.
  - **Safety tip:** remember to not look directly at the sun.

## NATURE LAUNCHER

**Materials:** pom-pom (or acorns), plastic spoon, sticks (2), rubber band or hair tie

1. **Find** two sticks, each 8-12 inches long. One stick must have a straight appearance and at least ½ inch thick. The other should be about 1 inch thick.
2. **Use** the rubber band to connect the end of the spoon to the straight stick. The spoon should be facing up.
3. **Wedge** the thicker stick between the straight stick and the spoon.
4. **To launch:**
  - Place one hand on the straight stick to steady the launcher. Place pom-pom (or acorn) on the spoon.
  - With one finger push the spoon down and let go to launch.
  - Why do pom-poms launch farther away than acorns? What adjustments can you make to your launcher to increase the distance the acorn flies?
5. **Safety tip:**
  - Adults should help support, create, and carefully supervise launchers.

## HIKE A TRAIL

- **I spy**- One person chooses an object and gives clues until others guess the object.
- **I'm going on trip and bringing...** the first player answers, "Apple," the next player says, "I'm going on a trip and bringing an apple and binoculars." The next player must add something beginning with "C" and so on through the alphabet. The answers will probably get sillier as you go.
- **"How many"** questions- How many birds can we see? How many squirrels? How many streams have we crossed? How many steps until the log up ahead? How many ponds are there at Otter Creek Lake & Park? How many trails are there at Otter Creek Lake & Park?
- **Tree Huggers**-This activity is like musical chairs but with built-in tree identification. One person serves as the "Tree Master." As you're hiking the Tree Master calls out the name of a tree (oak, for example). Everyone then runs and hugs an oak tree. The last one to run and hug an oak tree is out. Continue until only one person remains. The last person will be the new Tree Master.